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Humiliation at Punta del Este

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

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OF NEW YORK

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 5, 1962

DEROUNIAN. Mr. Speaker, the Nixon Avenue boys around the White House are trying to tell the people of the United States what a great victory was achieved at Punta del Este. I happen to agree with the conclusion reached by Newsday, the largest daily in my congressional district, which thinks that the Nation was humiliated. Coming, editorially, from a paper that generally supports the Kennedy administration adds strength to the views expressed on February 1:

PYRRHIC VICTORY

"Another such victory, and we are undone." (Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, referring to his dearly bought victory at Asculum, 280 B.C.)

The wisdom of the ancients never loses its timeliness, as our victory at Punta del Este amply demonstrates. We indeed succeeded in ousting Cuba from the Organization of American States—by one vote. The original proposal of Secretary of State Rusk, that the Americans impose economic sanctions on Cuba, sank without a trace. It was, in the words of Little Peterkin, "a famous victory."

Look who helped us: Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama, among other small countries. The only significant votes for our side came from Venezuela and Uruguay. We enlisted almost all the little nations, but none of the really big ones. The vitally important and influential A-B-C states (Argentina, Brazil, Chile) abstained. So did Mexico, our next-door and presumably good neighbor. These larger countries don't like Fidel Castro, but they are equally aware of dangerous ultra-left wing movements at home. Governments might have been overthrown had they gone along.

Thus, despite the humiliation of the Cuban invasion, also, we have now pried a diplomatic defeat. We have not saved face by bringing about the ouster of Cuba. We have lost face. For it, in its own hemisphere, the United States cannot enforce its will. The rest of the world is bound to pay less attention to us.

This disaster could have been averted. If months in advance, the Latin American nations had been polled carefully, we might have had time to persuade at least more of them, or to abandon the idea of a conference with as little time as we could be sure of success. Open diplomacy may be great in theory, but in fact there is no substitute for secret diplomacy as its forerunner. A great conference of nations, called to penalize a third factor, makes no sense unless the penance is assured in advance.

The first lesson this country can learn from the Punta del Este is that something obviously wrong with our Latin American interests, and that Latin American experts in the State Department lack judgment. They must never again to expose ourselves to such humiliation—needless humiliation, to boot.

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